

SPRING 2024

# Alumni Columns

Northwestern State University Magazine



# GREETINGS



**Dr. Marcus Jones (1992)**  
President  
Northwestern State University

Dear Alumni,

NSU has good news to report.

Fall to spring retention rates for first-time freshman rose to 87.8 percent this semester with some departments reporting as high as 90 percent retention of freshmen from Fall 2023 to Spring 2024. First-time freshmen applications are also rising and the university's persistence rate the number of students who stayed enrolled and graduated — reached its highest level since 2014. Hats off to the hard-working recruiters, faculty advisors and mentors who are meeting students where they are and helping them find their path at NSU.

Data from the NSU Foundation is also encouraging. For the third year in a row, the Foundation exceeded the previous year's contributions. The Foundation also exceeding state and national averages for return on investments. You can read more about that on the facing page.

This positive news is in large part because of you. Public and private partnerships and engagement with alumni and other stakeholders is vitally important to the university's financial health over the next several years. Your commitment and investment in NSU — whether through volunteerism, financial support or sharing the message of NSU — is deeply appreciated and we are committed to being the best stewardship of our assets.

Thank you for all that you do to support NSU and as always, Fork 'Em Demons.



**Danielle Antoon Cobb (2010)**  
Director  
Alumni Affairs

Dear Alumni,

Spring is in the air and the Alumni and Development staff have hit the road to bring a taste of NSU to a city near you. Alumni After Hours receptions are underway. Check [www.northwesternstatealumni.com](http://www.northwesternstatealumni.com) for an event near you.

It was wonderful to see so many community members and NSU alumni come together to support the NSU Foundation at Flavor of Louisiana. We are so thankful for the generosity of our alumni and supporters and their enthusiasm about returning to Natchitoches. Many of them were already talking about Homecoming, which has been set for Oct. 25-26. It's not too early to start making plans now.

Meanwhile, we are excited to host the Class of 1974 in celebrating their Golden Jubilee Thursday, May 9 - Friday, May 10. The class will receive their 50-year diplomas with festivities on Thursday and all graduates from 1974 and earlier are invited to the 50+ luncheon on Friday. Tickets are available at [www.northwesternstatealumni.com](http://www.northwesternstatealumni.com) or by calling (318) 357-5513.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Read the Columns online by scanning this QR code.



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## NSU ALUMNI OFFICERS

President .....	Leah Sherman Middlebrook, Dallas, 1986, 2016
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2nd Vice President .....	J. Scott Repp, McKinney, Texas, 1989
Secretary .....	Dr. Lisa Landry Mathews, Shreveport, 1992
Treasurer .....	Kimberly Martin, Houston, 1988
Past President .....	Patricia Hrapmann, New Orleans, 1973, 1978

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Vice President for External Affairs .....	Dr. William Drake Owens, 2004, 2005

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Steven Celestine .....	Shreveport, 1989
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Erik Cox .....	Humble, TX 1992
Shade Dufrene .....	Savannah, Texas, 1999, 2003
Allen Evans .....	Shreveport, 1989
John Evans .....	Natchitoches, 1992
LaTasha Gray-Grant .....	Mansfield, Texas, 2007
Emilyn Horton .....	Natchitoches, 1987, 1993, 2001
Lynn Kees .....	Coppell, TX 1983
Emilia King .....	Shreveport, 2017
Jeremy LaCombe .....	New Roads, 1999
Lane Luckie .....	Tyler, Texas, 2008
Waylon Metoyer .....	Plugerville, TX 2008
Virginia Monceret .....	New Roads, 2001
Mandi Mueller .....	New Orleans, 2009
Camille Nunez .....	Slidell, 2001
Joe Robertson .....	DeQuincy, 1990
Mark Spikes .....	League City, Texas, 1991
Joseph B. Stamey .....	Natchitoches, 1983
Crystal Hemphill Stewart .....	Natchitoches, 1997, 2003
Toni Stroud .....	Natchitoches, 1989
Glenn Talbert .....	Shreveport, 1964
Jim Villard .....	Alexandria, 1983

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Jerry Brungart .....	Natchitoches, 1969, 1971
Leonard Endris (deceased) .....	Leesville, 1974
Dr. Hayward Hargrove .....	Black Mountain, N.C., 1964
Gail Metoyer Jones .....	Natchez 1981, 1998

## STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

SGA President .....	Bailey Willis, Opelousas
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## ALUMNI COLUMNS STAFF

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Contributors .....	David West
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Design/Layout .....	Chris Reich, 2007, 2009 Amy Lee, 2019 Cree Roark Gentry, 2022 Daphne Hines, 1982, 1984

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## Foundation: Record fund raising, endowment performance

The NSU Foundation secured over \$7 million in private contributions in 2023, exceeding the previous year total by over \$2 million and marking the third straight year that the Foundation has recorded increases in contributions year over year.

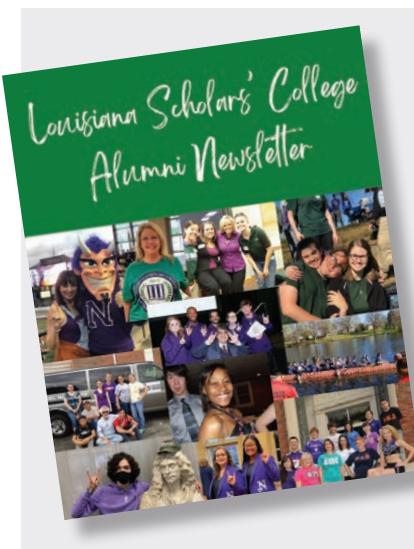
The Foundation also announced record endowment returns and growth in 2023, outperforming peer educational institutions and exceeding state and national averages. A recent analysis conducted by Clearview Fiduciary Alliance ranked the NSU Foundation in the first quartile compared to peer institutions across the country with a return of 16 percent. This boost in performance and increases in endowment contributions led to overall growth of the portfolio. While other institutions in Louisiana grew an average of 2.5 percent last year, the NSU Foundation endowment grew 8.4 percent, exceeding the national average of 7.7 percent, according to the National Association of College and University Business Officers. Its study examined 688 endowments with combined assets of \$839 billion.

NSU Foundation Executive Director Drake Owens attributed fund raising and endowment performance success to key support from donors, staff and volunteers as well as the Foundation's proactive approach in developing partnerships with business, industry and organizations that promote education and economic development.

"Contributions from major donors and strategic positioning by the NSU Office of Development and members of the NSU Foundation Fund Raising and Finance/Investment committees resulted in a record year for private support and endowment performance," Owens said.

The ripple effect of the Foundation's success extends throughout the university's service region. A 2022 economic impact study reported that NSU contributed nearly \$520 million to the economy of northwest and central Louisiana and supported the creation of 7,200 jobs in the region.

For information on supporting the NSU Foundation, visit [www.northwesternstatealumni.com](http://www.northwesternstatealumni.com).



The Louisiana Scholars' College launched its inaugural alumni newsletter in March. News about alumni for future installments is always welcome. To share your accomplishments, email [farris@nsula.edu](mailto:farris@nsula.edu) and include high resolution pictures.

To view the first issue visit: [www.nsula.edu/ScholarsAlumnissue1](http://www.nsula.edu/ScholarsAlumnissue1) or click the QR Code below.



**ON THE COVER:** Pink dogwoods bloom on the Grits and Mary Ryan Gresham Bird Trail, located on the west side of Eugene P. Watson Memorial Library. The trail is a habitat for native plants, shrubs and trees that attract birds and butterflies and is used for ecology and environmental science studies.

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# Construction, improvement projects are underway and on track

The 18-month project for Robert Aloft Hall is running on schedule, according to Jennifer Kelly, Northwestern State University's executive director of University Affairs. The steel frame is under construction and progress continues, despite a few days of spring rain.

The contract for the David and Sherry Morgan Sports Performance Center has been sent to the contractor and the timeline for its construction will be developed when approved by the state Office of Facility Planning and Control. Preliminary surface work, such as the marking of utilities and preparation for construction, has already begun.

The roof and hood replacement for Fournet Hall is in the final stages of design by the architect and engineers. Bids should be released in the next six weeks.

Design work on the rigging system – the system of ropes and pulleys that enable a stage crew to hoist scenery, lights and stage effects -- in A.A. Fredericks Auditorium are underway in preparation for a future upgrade. An architect from Shreveport has been selected and will work with faculty and administrators in Department of Theatre and Dance and facilities personnel

on the project. The upgrade should begin in the next six weeks, working around stage productions that are scheduled for the spring.

Elevator updates are ongoing in Kyser Hall and Watson Library. An elevator project at the Shreveport campus is complete and awaiting final inspection.

The replacement of stadium lights in Turpin Stadium will be complete in late spring, Kelly said. Lighting upgrades in Prather Coliseum were completed last fall.

"With all the rain we are addressing the problem of potholes on campus," Kelly said. "The Student Government Association is working with us on a trash can project. They will partner with the Department of Fine and Graphic Art to paint some of the trash cans that will be placed in strategic locations around campus where we frequently find litter."

Administrators at NSU have submitted five-year capital outlay plans and funding proposals for fiscal year 2025 to the University of Louisiana System. Capital outlay plans outline proposed construction projects that are submitted annually to the Louisiana Legislature for state funding consideration.



Four-year-old students NSU's Child Development Center visited the construction site of the future Aloft Hall as part of a unit on buildings. Managers from DonahueFavret Construction gave students hardhats, vests, goggles and goodie bags and answered questions about building, equipment and safety. Facing students are, from left, Project Manager Jess Favret, Superintendent Zach Favret, Austin Millet, assistant superintendent, and Faith Stanfield, CDC director. When complete Aloft Hall will replace Kyser Hall as NSU's main academic building.



Party-goers danced the night away at Flavor of Louisiana.

## Northwestern threw a fund raiser and everyone showed up

NSU's March 15 fund raiser, Flavor of Louisiana, drew more than 700 guests to mix and mingle while sampling Louisiana seafood dishes prepared by some of the region's most popular chefs. Guests enjoyed seafood wontons, crawfish and grits, jambalaya and much more paired with shamrock martinis, Demon daiquiris and a festive atmosphere.

Organizer Cristy Bernard said this year's event was the best one yet.

"This year was a great success. Our chefs did an amazing job," Bernard said. "Ticket sales, sponsorships, word of mouth promotion...it was all positive. I'm so grateful for everyone who attended, the chefs and vendors and our wonderful volunteers."

In addition to seafood dishes, guests could opt for chicken and sausage gumbo, mini meat pies or pizzas bites with pralines and gourmet coffee liqueurs for those with a sweet tooth.

Bernard said Flavor of Louisiana raised about \$125,000 to benefit student scholarships, support for faculty development and unrestricted funds.

Flavor of Louisiana was presented in

partnership with the Louisiana Seafood Board.

Earlier in March, the NSU Foundation announced that contributions over the past three years have shown steady increases. Events like Flavor of Louisiana play an important role in engaging with the community and enhancing relationships with alumni.

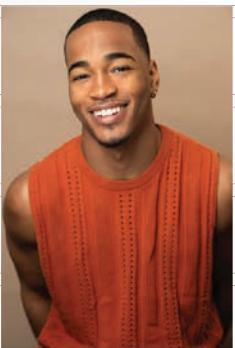
Flavor of Louisiana kicked off a big weekend in Natchitoches, as many alumni had also returned to town for the popular St. Patrick's Day Pub Crawl hosted by Natchitoches Young Professional that took place Saturday, March 16. An added bonus was the first-ever St. Patrick's Day parade presented by the Krewe of Dionysos after their Mardi Gras parade was rained out back in February.

"I'd like to thank everyone who attended Flavor of Louisiana for their continued support for Northwestern," said Dr. Drake Owens, vice president for External Affairs. "An event like this takes a lot of teamwork and I want to compliment the Office of Development staff for all they did to make it successful."





Barrett



Brooks



Carrier



Conway



Jones

## DEMONS ON BROADWAY

### Theatre and Dance alumni shine on the Great White Way

Five alumni of NSU's Theatre and Dance program are working on Broadway this spring.

Casey Barrett has been in "Book of Mormon" for more than 10 years after being in the show's national tour. Michael Ivan Carrier has been in the cast of "& Juliet" for more than a year. Luther Brooks IV made his debut in "Back to the Future" in early February. Polanco Jones Jr. made his debut in "The Wiz," after being in the show's national tour. Holli' Conway is in the cast of "Lempika" which opened in March. This is her third show on Broadway.

"Choosing the theatre program at NSU was one of the best decisions I have ever made in terms of becoming the professional I am today," said Barrett, a 2009 graduate. "I didn't realize it at the time, but they were instilling in us through our required coursework an understanding and grasp on the art of theatre as a whole."

Barrett said the program required acting students to take classes in all aspects of theatre which was a big help to him.

"With that broad span of training came an instilled work ethic for which there isn't a class you can take," said Barrett.

"They didn't coddle us. They didn't tell us we were great all the time. If you were falling behind in a certain area, they were quick to tell you and it was up to you to catch up. This translated so well to the professional world, especially coming from a smaller program with fewer resources. It was an attitude of 'If you want something to happen, you better get out there and figure out how to make it happen for yourself.' I'm so grateful for that."

Brooks' regional credits include: "Choir Boy" (Portland Center Stage), Disney's "AIDA" (Stages St. Louis), "Beautiful: The

Carole King Musical" (Arvada Center), "In The Heights" (Broadway Palm), Transcendence Theatre. He has been in Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and HBO's "We're Here."

"NSU enabled me to cultivate an on-campus community that supported my dreams and talents in the classroom that created the performer I am on Broadway today," said Brooks, a 2021 graduate.

"Carrier, a 2017 graduate, was in the first national tour of "Once on this Island." He

has worked with the Maine State Music Theatre, Virginia Repertory Theatre, Cortland Repertory Theatre, Short North Stage, Sierra Repertory Theatre, TEXAS the Outdoor Musical Drama and The Palace Theater.

"NSU helped to foster an environment that was challenging, explorative and fruitful," said Carrier. "The facilities available are some of the best in the region. I took advantage of the dance, voice and acting classes as much as possible in order for me to feel prepped and versed. The faculty created a well-rounded environment that allowed growth for my specific potential. I received this education while curating my own college experience that allowed me to grow into myself and become the artist I am today."

Carrier said the Out on a Limb improv troupe helped him gain confidence on stage and the opportunities to audition at conferences for theaters and performing companies across the country helped him build a professional resume and make connections before graduating.

After graduating, Conway was a playlist performer on Carnival Cruise Lines. In 2018, she was crowned Miss Louisiana and went on to represent the state at the Miss America Scholarship Contest, coming home as a talent preliminary award winner and second runner-up. Immediately after her reign, Conway

*"NSU enabled me to cultivate an on-campus community that supported my dreams and talents in the classroom that created the performer I am on Broadway today." —Luther Brooks*

# Natchez Historical Society honors archaeologist "Smoky Joe" Frank

Joseph "Smoky Joe" Frank, a retired archaeologist and NSU alumnus, was honored with the 2024 Historic Preservation Award presented by the Natchez (Mississippi) Historical Society. The Historic Preservation Award honors individuals or organizations who have made a significant contribution to historic preservation or the study of history within the Natchez area.

Frank graduated from NSU in 1970 with a degree in history and anthropology and earned a master's in social studies with an emphasis in anthropology at NSU in 1975. But his work as an archaeologist in Natchez began in the early 1960s, when after graduating high school he began digging at the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians. From then he worked and went to school and served with the Mississippi National Guard. After earning his undergraduate degree, he went to work for the Peabody Museum where, in cooperation with Harvard University, he assisted with a Lower Mississippi Valley Survey of the Natchez Bluffs.

Frank currently serves on the Natchez Preservation Commission and is a tour guide at Elms Court and Hope Farm. He previously served as an officer with the Natchez Historical Society. In 2004, the Mississippi Archaeological Society honored him as the winner of the Calvin J. Brown Award. He has also been honored with the L.B. Jones award by the Mississippi Archaeological Association for his years of contributions to Mississippi Archaeology.

In addition to his work in Mississippi, Frank served as an officer in the Southwest Louisiana Archaeological Society and in the newly formed Louisiana Archaeological Society. In 1980, he was selected to sit on the Louisiana National Register of Historic Places Review Committee. During the 1990s, Frank worked with the Natchez Trace Archaeologist of the National Park surveying the

last nine miles of the uncompleted development of the Natchez Trace Parkway into Natchez.

Since his retirement from the State of Louisiana in 2001, Frank continues to do research on various projects. Between 2001 and 2010, he assisted an archaeologist on sites on Fort Rosalie and The Natchez Trace.



Smoky Joe Frank, left, is the winner of the 2024 Historic Preservation Award. It was presented to him Tuesday, Jan. 23, at the 2024 Annual Dinner of the Natchez Historical Society held at the Natchez Grand Hotel. He is pictured here with his wife, Carol, and their son, Brandon.

## Demons on Broadway continued

joined the Original Broadway Cast Production of "Tina: The Tina Turner Musical." The show was awarded 12 Tony Award nominations, including Best Musical. After finishing her run in "Tina," she joined the cast of the hit musical "Six" on Broadway and made history as the first Black woman to play the role of Katherine Howard on Broadway. "Lempicka," is based on the life and works of the iconic artist Tamara de Lempicka.

"At NSU, I gained the resilience, discipline and means to persevere that was all pivotal throughout my journey to Broadway," said Conway, a 2016 graduate. "As a member of NSU Theatre, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., Make Your Own Theatre troupe and other campus organizations, I learned time management and leadership skills that I've benefited from continuously in my professional career."

Jones, a 2015 graduate, was choreographer for "Once on This Island" and "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and

Murder" and a player in "Pippin" at Le Petit Théâtre Du Vieux Carré in New Orleans. In 2020, he was named the Big Easy Theatre Person of the Year. He was in the cast of The New Group's production of "Black No More."

"As I reflect on my journey toward becoming a Broadway performer, I can't help but attribute a significant portion of my success to the invaluable experiences and training I received at Northwestern State University's Theater and Dance program," said Jones. "This institution not only equipped me with essential

skills but also fostered a holistic approach to performing arts that has been instrumental in shaping my career."

*"I can't help but attribute a significant portion of my success to the invaluable experiences and training I received at Northwestern State University's Theater and Dance program."  
-Polanco Jones, Jr.*

Jones said one of the key aspects that set the program apart was its comprehensive curriculum.

"From acting techniques and voice training to dance classes and stagecraft, the program provided a well-rounded education that laid a solid foundation for a career in theater," said Jones. "The dedicated faculty, comprised of seasoned

professionals and industry veterans, offered insightful guidance and mentorship, ensuring that I gained a deep understanding of the art and craft of performance. The program's emphasis on

practical experience played a pivotal role in preparing me for the demanding world of Broadway."

# Spotlights

**Coach Michael Schmitt** will serve as the first athletic director and head football coach at the new Prairieville High School expected to open this fall. Schmitt, a Baton Rouge native, has an extensive coaching background with 27 years of experience and an overall football record of 81-77.

Schmitt earned a bachelor's degree in Physical Education and Health in 1996 and a master's degree in Sports Administration in 1998. He is also an NSCA certified strength and conditioning specialist.

Schmitt served as the head football coach at Eaglecrest in Aurora, Colorado, from 2009 to 2012 and returned to the position in 2022. In between, he held the head coaching position at Cowanesque Valley in Pennsylvania and served as a teacher at Boces Stem Academy in New York.

Schmitt faced the challenges of Hurricane Katrina while serving as the head coach at Buras High in 2005. In the aftermath, he and his family relocated to Ascension Parish, where he continued his coaching career as an assistant coach for a year at East Ascension High School. He then served as the head coach at Live Oak High School for two seasons before moving to Colorado.

He has been recognized extensively including earning the 2021 District 4 Small Schools Coach of the Year (Colorado), the 2016 and 2016 Colorado Preps 5A Coach of the Year, the 2016 Denver Post All-Colorado Coach of the Year, the Denver Broncos Coach of the Week in 2016, and the NFL Coach of the Week in 2016.

Lone Star College named **Dr. Kristy Gray Vienne** as vice chancellor, Administration and Finance. Vienne will lead the LSC Finance and Administration Division which is responsible for the construction and facilities, budgeting and planning, accounting and financial reporting, payroll, auxiliary services and procurement for the college. Vienne began her official duties Feb. 5 after serving in the interim role since November.

Lone Star College is a public community college system serving the northern portions of the Greater Houston area.



**Dr. Kristy Vienne**

Vienne has served LSC as senior associate vice chancellor over Administrative Services since April 2023 and she was one of the former chief financial officer's direct reports. She previously held the position of associate vice president, Auxiliary Services & Business Services, Finance & Operations and was an adjunct faculty member at Sam Houston State University (SHSU).

Vienne earned a doctorate of Education from SHSU and a Master of Arts in 2005 and Bachelor of Science in 1999 from NSU, where she held several administrative positions. Vienne also took part in the Governor's Executive Development program at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin.

FTK Construction Services, a national general contractor specializing in affordable housing/low-income housing tax credits, announced the promotions of two NSU alumni in February.

**Greg Buckley** was appointed president and will provide direction and oversight of FTK's three divisions, affordable housing projects, market rate renovations



**Greg Buckley**

and insurance restoration projects. Buckley assumes his new position after serving as the vice president of construction services at FTK for the last three years, during which he was responsible for overseeing all aspects of preconstruction and production, averaging 250 projects annually for FTK. He began his career with FTK in 2011 as a senior portfolio

manager. Prior to joining FTK, he was construction manager with Penco Services. Since 2016, Buckley has overseen FTK's low-income housing tax credit projects, completing over 5,300 units and \$310,000,000 in contract value. Over the last 13 years, he has also successfully led initiatives to address growth, project performance, training and technological innovations to increase the functionality and effectiveness of FTK's systems.

Buckley earned a degree hospitality and tourism with a minor in business in 2005.

In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his family on their 20-acre ranch and supporting his daughter's competitive equestrian endeavors.

**Paul Medford** will serve as vice president of construction and will oversee the preconstruction and financial administration of projects in FTK's three divisions. Mefford assumes his new position after leading the business solutions focus at FTK for the



**Paul Mefford**

last two years in which he was responsible for resolving process challenges, conducting contract reviews and estimating audits for an average of 250 projects annually for FTK.

Mefford began his career with FTK in 2017 as a project estimator, quickly moving into implementing procedures and software to enhance the estimation process. Prior to joining FTK, he managed global logistic strategies with Paragon Offshore. Since 2017, he worked diligently to develop FTK's low-income housing tax credit project estimating processes, contributing to the completed contracts for over 5,300 units and \$310,000,000 in contract value.

At NSU, Mefford earned a bachelor's degree in business administration in 2006, then received his master's degree in finance from Sam Houston State University. He enjoys spending time at his family's ranch in central Texas.

## Carter named to 2024 class of Truman National Security Project

Dr. Robert Carter III (1995), a distinguished leader who left an indelible mark on both the U.S. Army and the world of academia, joined the Truman National Security Project last year. For more than 20 years, Truman has brought together thought leaders across the national security landscape and Carter joined Truman's most diverse class in history.

"The Truman Project represents a vibrant community passionate about shaping smarter, stronger global leadership," Carter said.

With the rank of colonel in the U.S. Army, Carter serves as the Department of Defense joint project manager for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Sensors, leading a team of over 450 military personnel, engineers, scientists and program managers who execute a budget of \$4.5B for developing, fielding and sustaining cutting-edge CBRN sensors, reconnaissance systems and mobile laboratory capabilities. His organization uses a comprehensive approach that integrates early warning systems, robotics, autonomous technology, decision support tools and advanced machine learning to enhance the military's readiness and national security against CBRN threats.

Carter's commitment to service and visionary leadership have had a profound impact on military medicine, research

and health policies, underpinned by his understanding of human physiology in extreme conditions. He is a prolific author and researcher who has made significant contributions to the understanding of military operational medicine, cardiovascular function and hemorrhage control, CBRN defense, human performance in extreme environments and the nation's public health.

Carter's work has been recognized by the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Institute of Stress. He served as a military aide to President Barak Obama from 2008-1020 and is a life member of the Society of White House Military Aides. Among his many academic positions, he was senior lecturer at Northeastern University's George J. Kostas Research Institute for Homeland Security and is an adjunct professor at the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio and the University of Maryland Global Campus and is found director of the Master of Public Health program and senior lecturer in the Azusa Pacific University System and Los Angeles Pacific University in California.

Carter actively participates on academic boards, including the board of directors of the William Townsend Porter Family Foundation and is public health advisor to Team Rubicon International.

Carter earned a Bachelor of Science



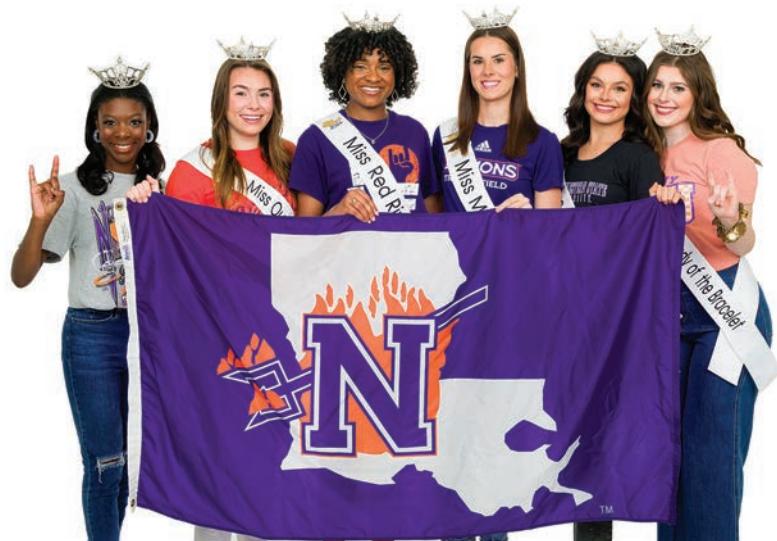
**Dr. Robert Carter III**

degree in Biology at NSU, a Master of Public Health in Biostatistics and Epidemiology and Ph.D. in Physiology and Biophysics at the University of North Texas Health Science Center and a Master of Science in Strategic and International Studies from the United States Army War College, where he graduated in the top 1 percent of his class.

At NSU, he was a member of the track and field team and was president of the Theta Chi chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

## Six headed to Miss Louisiana

Six Northwestern State students will compete in the Miss Louisiana pageant June 13-15 in Monroe. From left are Miss Monroe Sachiri Henderson of Shreveport, Miss Ouachita Parish Leah Thompson of Rosepine, Miss Red River City Nilah Pollard of Shreveport, Miss Minden Maison Wilbanks of DeRidder, Miss Cane River Jesse Foshee of Natchitoches and Miss Northwestern Lady of the Bracelet Madison Simms of Natchitoches. Whoever is crowned will succeed the reigning Miss Louisiana, NSU's own Makenzie Scroggs of Marksville, who won the title last year competing as Miss Natchitoches City of Lights. Two years ago, Scroggs was first runner up in the Miss Louisiana pageant competing as Miss Northwestern – Lady of the Bracelet. More information on Miss Louisiana is available at [www.misslouisiana.com/](http://www.misslouisiana.com/).



# SON creates Ring of Honor with four inaugural honorees

Student members of the Spirit of Northwestern Marching Band recognized two students and two former directors as the first recipients of a newly created award, the Ring of Honor. The award was presented at the first Spirit of Northwestern awards banquet. The event was supported by the band service fraternity and sorority, Kappa Kappa Psi and Tau Beta Sigma, to celebrate the hard work and achievement of all members of the Spirit of Northwestern and its supporters.

McKenzie Ryer, a senior music business major from Waxahachie, Texas, and Konnor Thibodeaux, a senior music education major from Lafayette, were the first student inducted into the Ring of Honor. They were selected by fellow band members.

During the inaugural year, the band faculty recognized two individuals as honorary members because of their contributions to the SON and the lasting effect of their contributions to the band program. They were Bill Brent, director of bands from 1983-2013, and Dr. Jeff Mathews, director of bands from 2013-2021.

Established during the Fall 2023 season, members of the Ring of Honor completed three or more years of service to the SON, are in their final season and are chosen by their peers and the band



The first inductees into the Spirit of Northwestern Marching Band Ring of Honor were, from left, McKenzie Ryer, Konnor Thibodeaux and former directors of bands Dr. Jeff Mathews and Bill Brent.

faculty. It is one of the highest recognitions a member of the SON may achieve, as it symbolizes the lasting effects of their character, work ethic and leadership paired with superior service to the organization and loyalty to Northwestern State.

## Jennings scholarship honors couple who were teachers, mentors

Luke Niedens of Queen City, Texas, is the inaugural recipient of the Richard and Shirley Jennings Scholarship, awarded to a student in NSU's School of Creative and Performing Arts. The scholarship honors a couple who embodied selfless service, a strong work ethic and a commitment to music education.

Niedens is pursuing a degree in music education/instrumental (K-12). Dr. Kristine Coreil and Dr. Jeff Mathews, retired CAPA faculty and dear friends of the Jennings, created the scholarship through an initial donation, raised additional funds from a network of alumni and then fulfilled the scholarship to its full endowment.

Richard Jennings was a professor and department chair in the music division for many years, teaching French horn, music education courses and class piano. He was inducted into the Louisiana Music Educators Association Hall of Fame for his work as a high school band director in the 1950s, as well as his strong commitment to music education as a college professor and mentor from the 1960s through the 1990s. He passed away 2021.

His wife, Shirley Jennings, served as the NSU harp instructor and a class piano instructor for decades. She also worked in the NSU Registrar's Office, assisting thousands of students in their matriculation. She is best known in the community as a violin and harp teacher to students of all ages, from the very youngest beginning violinists to older harp enthusiasts throughout the Ark-La-Tex region. She was the conductor of the Natchitoches Harp Ensemble, at one time the largest ongoing harp ensemble in the South. She passed away in 2018.

The scholarship will be awarded to a graduate or undergraduate music education major, with consideration to music performance majors. Students must be a French Horn major or violin or harp

major or harp minor. Criteria stipulates that the scholarship will be awarded to a horn player in even-numbered years and a violin or harp player in odd-numbered years. Recipients must maintain a 3.2 or higher GPA, be recommended by their major professor and approved by the CAPA director.

Friends who wish to contribute to the scholarship can do so at [www.northwesternstatealumni.com/jennings-scholarship/](http://www.northwesternstatealumni.com/jennings-scholarship/).



Luke Niedens, center is the inaugural recipient of the Richard and Shirley Jennings Scholarship. He is surrounded by Dr. Alexis Sczepanik, NSU horn professor, and Drs. Kristine Coreil and Jeff Mathews, who created the scholarship to honor the Jennings, their mentors and friends.

# Weaver Education Enhancement Fund will support School of Education

An education enhancement fund at Northwestern State University that honors an influential educator has reached the \$10,000 mark. Interest from the fund is now eligible to be used to enhance teaching and learning in NSU's School of Education.

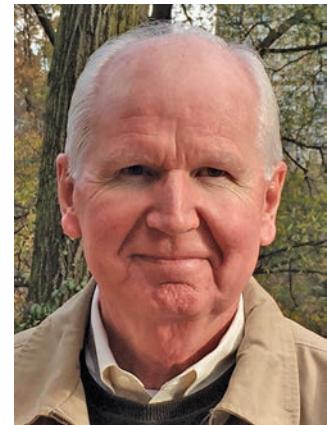
The Patrick D. Weaver Education Enhancement Fund was established in memory of an NSU graduate and Oil City native. Weaver earned a degree in business and distributive education at NSU 1967 and a Master of Education from Centenary College. He served as the Distributive Education coordinator in Caddo Parish at Northwood and Byrd high schools for a number of years. In 1993, he accepted a position with the Louisiana State Department of Education, where he worked in the Bureaus of Teacher Certification and Accountability.

At the time of his retirement in 2011, he was serving as deputy undersecretary in the office of the State Superintendent. He died April 12, 2022, at his home in Lafayette.

The Weavers are an education family. His wife, Chris, is a former

Louisiana Teacher of the Year who has served education in numerous capacities. His two stepsons, Wade and Cody Strother, and their wives, are currently public school teachers. His stepdaughter, Shannon Strother is the director of a research institute at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. The family sponsored the Distinguished Educator's Reception in 2022 and 2023 in Weaver's memory.

Program enhancement funds are administered to enhance learning, research, travel and/or professional development to meet the needs of the School.



Weaver

## Former adjutant general retires after three decades of service

Friends, family, and fellow service members gathered March 9 at the Dabadie Gym Complex at Louisiana National Guard Training Center, Pineville, to bid farewell and congratulations to Maj. Gen. Damian "Keith" Waddell (2020), the former adjutant general of Louisiana, on his retirement from the military.

Waddell, who is known for challenging soldiers and airmen to 'Be Excellent Every Day,' retired from the LANG with more than 33 years of service.

A native of New Roads, Waddell served as Louisiana's adjutant general for the last four years. During this time, he led all National Guard operational missions and training.

Waddell graduated from the Louisiana State University ROTC program with a Bachelor of Science in physical education and a minor in general science. He earned a Master of Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College and a Master of Science in Homeland Security from NSU, then completed his certification in educational leadership from McNeese State University.

Waddell began his military career as an officer in 1990 and served on active duty at Fort Johnson, formerly Fort Polk, from 1991-1995 before joining the LANG in 1995.

Waddell chose to be an engineer officer after growing up hearing his grandfather's stories from World War II and went on to serve in various leadership positions and

staff assignments at the company, battalion and brigade levels. Notably, he commanded the 769th Engineer Battalion, the 139th Regional Support Group and the 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Additionally, he served as the joint director of military support for Louisiana, assistant adjutant general and ultimately as adjutant general.

Waddell has mobilized numerous times for stateside responses and is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, where he served as the battalion commander for 769th Engineer Battalion while deployed.

Before his appointment as the head of the LANG, Waddell was the assistant principal of Westlake High School. He was named the Louisiana High School Coach of the Year in baseball in 2003 and the Louisiana High School Coach of the Year in basketball in 2005. He has also been named District Coach of the Year several times for multiple sports throughout his coaching career.

Waddell and his wife, Lisa, reside in Lake Charles and have three children and four grandchildren.

Waddell was awarded the Certificate of



Maj. Gen. Damian "Keith" Waddell and family

Service from the National Guard Bureau, the United States Army Certificate of Retirement, a Certificate of Appreciation from the President of the United States and the Minuteman Plaque commemorating his 28-plus years of service to the LANG.

Waddell also holds the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Louisiana Legion of Merit, Louisiana War Cross, Combat Action Badge, Parachutist Badge, Bronze De Fleury Medal and the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award.

*Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Noshoba Davis, Louisiana National Guard Public Affairs Office.*

# Extra Mile, First Gen awards presented to Sigmas, Pi Kapps

NSU alumni and long-time supporters David and Sherry Morgan awarded almost \$60,000 in scholarships during the annual Morgan Extra Mile Scholarship Program held March 4, an event that recognizes outstanding undergraduates who are also members of Alpha Zeta chapter of Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority and the Beta Omicron chapter of Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity. Extra Mile Scholarship recipients are students who "go the extra mile" in pursuit of their degree. The Morgans also awarded Morgan First Generation Scholarships to students who are the first in their families to attend college.

David Morgan is a 1973 NSU graduate and past president of NSU's Beta Omicron Chapter of Pi Kappa Phi. He established the Extra Mile Scholarship in 2008 to recognize members of Pi Kappa Phi who



distinguish themselves through academic success, chapter leadership, campus involvement and part-time employment. The scholarship has since grown and is awarded at the national level as well as in the local chapter.

The Sherry Fargeson Morgan "Extra Mile" Scholarship for Sigma Sigma Sigma was announced in 2017 and mirrors the criteria for Pi Kappa Phi by honoring students who are outstanding and high achieving members of the chapter. Sherry Morgan is a 1973 graduate of NSU. During the program, she was presented with the Sigma Sigma Sigma Golden Violet from the sorority's national executive to honor her as a faithful member for the past 52 years.



Morgan Extra Mile Scholarships were awarded to Tri Sigma recipients seated from left Kaley Koss, Kacy Young, Madison Cook, Zoe Johnson, Peyton Fuller, Natalie Mangandi, Amber Long, Brooke Straight and Katharyn Evans. On the back row are Pi Kappa Phi recipients Caid Kendrick, Zachary Cooper, Samuel McCray, Sherry and David Morgan, Mitchell Mayfield, Dominic Ross and Colby Grayson.



Morgan First Generation Scholarship were awarded to Tri Sigma recipients seated from left Kaley Koss, Jesse Foshee, Kayla Lanassa, Josephine Martinez, Peyton Fuller, Alyssa Austin, Brea Baca-White, Lexie Amond, Natalie Cobb and Cailen Wiltcher. On the back row are Pi Kappa Phi recipients Lance Corry, Wyatt Aguillard, Zach Cooper, donors Sherry and David Morgan, Mitchell Mayfield, Jayden Gray and Caid Kendrick.

Wes Breeden, 2003 NSU graduate and Pi Kappa Phi alumnus, emceed the program. Breeden serves on the NSU Foundation Board of Directors and the Pi Kappa Phi Foundation. During the program, Steve Esworthy, chief advancement officer for the national Pi Kappa Phi Foundation, recognized the Beta Omicron Alumni Chapter as a Champion Master Alumni Chapter, having regularly exceeding expectations in alumni volunteering, alumni engagement and support of the student chapter.

# Endris Scholarship recognizes devoted alum's dedication to NSU

The family of a devoted Northwestern State University alumnus established a scholarship in his memory that will benefit a student pursuing a degree in nursing or biological sciences. The Leonard F. Endris Memorial Scholarship was created to honor an individual who served for 28 years on the Alumni Association Board of Directors and was named as Board Member Emeritus in 2019.

According to family, Endris "was a loyal Demon football fan and supported athletics through attendance and donations. Since 1980 he faithfully occupied Section F, Row Q, Seat 17 of Turpin Stadium." At the time of his death in August 2022, his season tickets were already purchased.

"We are grateful for the impact Dad made at NSU and the opportunity to celebrate his influence through this scholarship," said Matt Endris, his son. "The purpose of the scholarship is to invest in the educational experience of students in the biological sciences. We want to be a blessing to them since NSU was such a formative part of Dad's direction in life."

Leonard Endris enrolled at Northwestern State September 1970 and earned a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Management in 1973 and a Master of Science in Zoology in 1974. He married his wife Robbie Williamson Endris, a 1972 alumna, on Aug. 11, 1972. Her family has deep roots at NSU.

"My mom's family has been at NSU since my great-grandmother [Belle Connella Williamson] graduated here in 1901. Her diploma hangs on the wall in my parents' home."

Many other members of the family attended NSU over the decades, including Leonard and Robbie's sons Matt (1997) and Paul (2002) and Paul's wife Jamie Evans Endris (2001). Matt's wife, Jana DeBusk Endris, attended summer classes and their daughter, Claire Endris, is a

graduating senior who will earn a degree in Health and Exercise Science this May.

"When my parents met at NSU in the early 70s, Daddy made this his school when he and my mom started life here together," Matt Endris said. "I went to my dad's master's degree graduation in

a baby carrier. He was so proud when I graduated in 1997 and when my daughter chose NSU after graduating high school. She is a fifth generation Demon."

Leonard Endris was born in Pana, Illinois, and graduated high school in 1965. He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and served for four years in Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Norway and Thailand. During his deployment in Thailand, he was assigned to the 56th Special Operations Wing. After a year of distinguished service at Nakhon Phanom AFB, he was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal and was named the First Term Airman of the Year for NKP in the Pacific Air Command. He finished his service at Barksdale AFB in Bossier City as a staff sergeant.

After enrolling at NSU and completing his degrees, he worked for the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and enjoyed a career working with landowners and local governments to preserve natural resources and improve habitat for wildlife.

"He highly valued both degrees he received at NSU and faithfully supported



The family of Leonard F. Endris created a scholarship in his memory through a donation to the Northwestern State University Foundation. From left are Claire Endris, Robbie Williamson Endris, Matt Endris, Paul Endris, Judson Endris and Levi Endris.

the university for many years," Matt Endris said. "The Alumni Board gave him emeritus status when his terminal illness began to accelerate, and he cried when we gave him the plaque from the Association."

Those anecdotes epitomize how his father saw NSU and why the family wanted to establish a scholarship in his memory.

Leonard and Robbie Williamson Endris celebrated their 50th anniversary just a few days before his passing on Aug. 22, 2022.

"There are so many other stories, examples and memories that dad gave to me and our family. He loved this school and loved serving on the board. Dad's legacy of faithfulness and love are rooted in his relationship with Christ and displayed in the way he has faithfully supported those people and places he loved."

Friends can contribute to the Leonard F. Endris Memorial Scholarship by visiting <https://northwesternstatealumni.com/endris-scholarship/>.

## The NSU Foundation would like to announce the following newly established scholarships.



- Hall Family Scholarship in Engineering Technology - <https://northwesternstatealumni.com/hall-scholarship/>
- William W. Durand Mathematics Scholarship - <https://northwesternstatealumni.com/durand-math-scholarship/>
- Elaine Squyres Durand Elementary School - <https://northwesternstatealumni.com/durand-education-scholarship/>
- Juanita Martinez Coutee Memorial Scholarship - <https://northwesternstatealumni.com/coutee-scholarship/>
- Alicia Renee Davis Memorial Scholarship - <https://northwesternstatealumni.com/alicia-davis-scholarship/>

## FULLY ENDOWED: Janetha June Walton Dunahoe Scholarship



A Natchitoches family with a long history of community engagement and support for Northwestern State made a donation to the NSU Foundation to fully endow an already existing scholarship. Edwin and Lola Dunahoe, along with their children and grandchildren, fulfilled the Janetha June Walton Dunahoe Endowed Scholarship, which honors Edwin Dunahoe's mother. The donation is eligible to be matched dollar for dollar through a grant awarded to the Foundation by the Louisiana Board of Regents for institutions to provide scholarships to students pursuing mental, behavioral or allied health studies. The match will bring the scholarship total to \$100,000. Lola and Edwin Dunahoe are pictured with their children and grandchildren. On the front row from left are Jared Dunahoe, Ann-Marie Dunahoe, Danielle Dunahoe, Amelia June Dunahoe, Lola and Edwin Dunahoe, Sydney Reynolds and Abby Reynolds. On the back row are Jefferson Dunahoe, Marshall Dunahoe, Barrett Dunahoe, Lexie Dunahoe, Jason Dunahoe, Jason Reynolds, Ashley Reynolds and Lily Reynolds.

## FULLY ENDOWED: Dr. Jack P. Russell Professorship

A professorship established in Northwestern State University's School of Business that honors the memory of a dedicated professor of computer information systems has reached a level that qualifies to be matched by the Louisiana Board of Regents.

The Dr. Jack P. Russell Professorship in Business and Computer Information Systems was created with an initial donation of over \$50,000 and, through contributions from friends and former students, now stands at over \$80,000, and can be matched with \$20,000 from the BOR to fulfill the professorship at \$100,000.

Dr. Russell, along with his wife Barbara Russell, was a respected member of the CIS faculty at NSU and a pioneer in computer science education. They both retired in 2015. Dr. Jack Russell passed

away in September 2022.

"Jack was a computer educator for almost 50 years, 43 of them at the collegiate level," Barbara Russell said. "He started in the field when one had to wire boards and data was held on punched cards. He retired in the age of the Cloud, wi-fi and global online processing. The Russell family is proud to establish this professorship to continue his legacy and assist his computer educator successors

in furthering their careers and accomplishments."

**continued on next page**



The late Dr. Jack Russell and his wife Barbara Russell

## FULLY ENDOWED: Allen and Mary Lee Posey Scholarship

The Posey family of Natchitoches made a donation to the NSU Foundation to fully endow a scholarship that honors the late Allen and Mary Lee Posey, a couple who were active in the Natchitoches community and at NSU for more than 50 years. The funds will be matched dollar for dollar through a grant awarded to the Foundation by the Louisiana Board of Regents for institutions to provide scholarships to students pursuing mental, behavioral or allied health studies. The match will bring the scholarship total to \$120,000.

The Posey family established the Allen and Mary Lee Posey Scholarship in 2016. Allen Murph Posey Sr. and Mary Lee Sigler Posey were natives of Red River Parish who met at Northwestern State in 1946. Allen had served in the Army Air Corps during World War II and spent 23 months in German POW camps. After the war, he returned home and enrolled at Northwestern majoring in agriculture. Mary Lee was a home economics major. Their first date was made in the library at Northwestern where he asked her to a movie. They were married in January 1948.

Allen and Mary Lee Posey's association with NSU began before they met. Mary Lee's parents, Abner Lee and Nyease Dowies Sigler, were graduates of Louisiana State Normal College, as NSU was then known. Allen and Mary Lee were second generation students. Their three children and several grandchildren are NSU alumni.

In 1947, Mary Lee was the first NSU graduate in child development, a new program in the home economics curriculum. At that time, state certifications did not allow child development graduates to teach in public schools, so she continued her studies at night and during summers to earn bachelor's, master's and +30 in education. Allen was involved with agriculture, raising cattle as a hobby, and retired from the Louisiana Department of Motor Vehicles. He also served in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. Allen Posey passed away in 2003. Mary Lee Posey passed away in 2016.



The Posey family fulfilled a scholarship that honors the late Allen Murphy Sr. and Mary Lee Posey through a donation to the NSU Foundation. From left are Sheila Posey Clark, Lee Posey and Evie Posey. Not shown is Allen Posey Jr.

The match for scholarship is a result of funding targeted towards enhancing mental health services, awareness and outreach eligible for dollar for dollar matches if they meet criteria set forth by the Board of Regents in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Health.

For information on supporting scholarships through the NSU Foundation, contact Cristy Bernard, assistant director of Donor Relations, at [bernardc@nsula.edu](mailto:bernardc@nsula.edu) or (318) 357-4292.

### Russell Professorship continued

Russell grew up on a farm in Levita, Texas. He was a world-renowned visionary in the development of computer information systems. After earning his B.A. degree from Tarleton State University, he served as a military engineer specialist with the U.S. Army and Army Reserve and taught at the Gatesville State School for Boys. He obtained an M.S. in Computer Science from Florida Tech and a Ph.D. from the University of North Texas in Computer Science Teaching. Russell was an outstanding leader with genuine drive and vision who made significant contributions to thousands of students over his 43 years of teaching. He was an educator at Central Texas College,

Tarleton State University and NSU, where he and his wife Dr. Barbara Russell took numerous teams to winning competitions at the Association of Informational Technology Professionals (AITP) National College Conference.

A few of Dr. Russell's awards, publications and accomplishments include the following:

- "Business Programming Logic & Design." First edition and second edition textbook

- The Jack and Louise Arthur Distinguished Faculty Award for Excellence and Teaching, 1995 to 1996 from Tarleton State University
- Piper Professor of 1997 - Outstanding Scholarly and Academic Achievement

- Named Texas A&M University System Regents Professor at Tarleton State University, 1997
- EDSIG President, 1998 and 1999
- NSU Outstanding Service Award for Dedicated Service to the College of Business, 2003
- NSU Distinguished Service Award for Information Systems Education Conference, 2003
- Ben Bauman Award of Excellence, 2005
- NSU Alumni Association Excellence in Teaching, 2005
- Information Systems Educator of the Year, 2006
- Recipient of the Lifetime AITP-EDSIG FELLOW Achievement Award, 2009



PHOTO: Southland Conference

The Northwestern State women's track and field team earned its second consecutive indoor team title with a dominant performance, winning by 57 points over second place.

## Women's Track and Field rolls to 2nd consecutive SLC Indoor title

For the second consecutive season, the NSU women's track and field team won the Southland Conference indoor team title.

With 30.5 points scored in the meet, Sanaria Butler was named Most Outstanding Female Performer for the 2024 SLC Indoor Championships.

Butler competed in five events, earning two golds—in the women's 400 and as a member of the 4x400 relay team—a silver in the long jump and bronze in the triple jump.

The sophomore from Port Arthur, Texas, ran the anchor leg in the 4x400, and what was a microcosm of the meet, Butler ran away with it. NSU won the relay by more than four seconds over second place Lamar to cap off an incredible weekend in Alabama for the Lady Demons.

Earlier in the day, Butler dominated in her signature event, the 400-meters, winning by nearly an entire second over Southeastern Louisiana's Esther Nwanze.

Even though she went straight from one

event to the next, she added a bronze in the triple jump with a distance of 39-6.5.

On any other day, breaking a conference record would be headline news.

Keontae Gaines had a sensational day, flying to a pair of golds, including a blistering 20.72 in the 200-meter dash that broke the conference meet record.



He was one of two Demons to find the podium in the 200-meter dash, as Mikkel Johansson grabbed the bronze with a time of 21.29.

If that wasn't enough, Gaines won a close

60-meter dash race with a 6.68 to capture the gold over Texas A&M-Commerce's Ibrahim Fuseini's 6.69.

Butler and Gaines were just two of six gold won by NSU on the second day, joining Annemarie Broussard, who won the pole vault on day one.

The pairing was joined by Vanessa Balde (60-meter hurdles), Lynell Washington (60-meter dash), Carnitra Mackey (shot put) and Djimon Gumbs (shot put).

Balde started the day for NSU in the medal count, winning the gold, clocking an 8.55. She won a tight race over Lamar's Kayli Johnson, who came in second with a time of 8.56.

Balde also joined Butler on the 4x400 relay team that captured the gold.

She was one of two Lady Demons in the event, as he was joined by Raven-Symone Jarrett, who ran a 9.03 to place seventh.

While Gaines won the men's 60-meters as a newcomer, Washington did the same

*continued on next page*

# Roper Memorial Golf Tournament Funds HHP Scholarships

Northwestern State University will host the 42th annual Chris Roper Memorial Golf Tournament Saturday April 27 at Northwestern Hills with a kick-off party Friday, April 26. Proceeds from the tournament are used to fund two scholarships awarded each year to two deserving students who are enrolled in the Health & Human Performance Department.

Tee time for the tournament will be at 8:30 a.m. Saturday with check-in beginning at 8 a.m. The four-man scramble will include prizes for first, second and third place teams, closest to the hole, long drive and door prizes. The entry fee is \$300 per team or \$75 per person, which includes cart, green fees, lunch and beverages. Sponsorships are available at the \$500, \$250 and \$50 levels. Those unable to attend may consider a tee sponsorship which is \$50. Tee signs are placed on different tee boxes around the course. Lunch will be served after the awards.

Friday's kick-off party will be from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Antoon's.

Those who plan to arrive on Friday, April 29 and stay the weekend can make reservations at the Comfort Suites by calling (318) 228-8816. A special rate is available for the Chris Roper Golf Tournament. Fifteen rooms have been set aside.

Entry fees should be sent to Jill Bankston or Cristy Bernard, NSU Foundation, Natchitoches, LA 71497. Checks can be made payable to the NSU Foundation Memo: Chris Roper. For more information, contact Bernard at bernardc@nsula.edu or call (318) 357-4292.

The tournament is held annually in memory of Chris Roper, a native of Camden, Arkansas, who was a senior and top golfer on the 1981 Demon Squad. He was a member of the Trans-American All-Conference team, placing ninth in the league tournament. He was killed in a traffic accident over Christmas break in 1982. Over the years, the tournament has generated enough money to support two scholarships that provide \$1,500 per semester for recipients.



## Women's Track and Field continued

on the women's side as a season veteran at NSU. Washington won four consecutive 60-meter dashes at the indoor conference championships.

Running in her last indoor conference meet, Washington sprinted to a 7.41, to take the gold.

Mackey and Gumbs each won the shot put for the women and men, respectively.

Gumbs corralled his second gold medal in the indoor shot put, also doing so in 2023. He launched a best of 63-6 to not only win the gold, but also a trip to Boston at the NCAA Indoor Nationals.

In addition to Washington earning her fourth consecutive gold, the senior also earned a silver in the 200-meter finals. Four Lady Demons qualified for the finals, two of whom found the podium. Washington was joined on the medal stand by Balde, who ran a season-best 24.04 to win the bronze.

Butler finished fifth in the 200, while Maygan Shaw sprinted to a time of 24.57 to finish sixth.

In addition to Butler winning the gold in the 400, Shaw (54.69) grabbed sixth and Tranasia Jones (55.82) posted a season best en route to placing seventh.

On the men's side, Johansson ran a personal-best 48.29 in the 400-meter dash to place seventh.

Even before the 60-meter hurdles took place, Tim Pelkmans started his final three events in the men's heptathlon. Pelkmans began the day with a season-best 8.47 in the 60-meter hurdles before posting a personal best in the pole vault, clearing 14-1.25. The freshman brought home the silver with a total of 5,262 points.

In the triple jump, Andrew Gilreath earned the bronze medal with a season-best jump of 49-2.25.

The women's had three athletes finish in the top five on the women's side, led by Butler's bronze.

Jaslyn Smith posted a season-best 39-6 to come in fourth and Victoria Byrd had a 39-5.25 in her first triple jump to place fifth.

Jarrett tied a season best in the women's high jump, clearing 5-3.75, which tied for fifth.

# In Memory

1949 – Mary Christine Wilson Dick, Dec. 13, 2023, Birmingham, Alabama	1965 – Robert Earl “Bob” Sheppard, Jan. 7, 2024, Natchitoches	2020 – Gloria Patterson, Dec. 19, 2023, Baton Rouge
1950 – Ann Keyes Lee, Jan. 17, 2024, Richmond, Virginia	1967 – Barbara Standard Nugent, March 9, 2024, Austin, Texas	Varwood Varnado Arie – Jan. 21, 2024, Natchitoches
1953 – Johnny Houston Haynes, Jan. 15, 2024, Logansport	1968 – Jane Ann Fobes Martin, December 9, 2023, Conway, Arkansas	Willie Lee Pearson – Jan. 25, 2024, Oxford, Mississippi
1954 – Kathleen Celine Prudhomme Batten, Jan. 1, 2024, Natchitoches	1969 – Peggy Ellen Russell, Aug. 18, 2021, Elizabethtown, Kentucky	Charles Dudley Peters – Feb. 13, 2024, Shreveport
1957 – Alfred Daniel Lucious, M.D., Jan. 3, 2024, Baytown, Texas	1969, 1994 – Sharlee Angelin Salter Davis Funderburk – Feb. 26, 2024, Florien	Donna Suzanne Deville – Feb. 2, 2024, St. Joseph, Michigan
1958 – Donald M. Cook, Jan. 16, 2024, Orlando, Florida	1969 – Danny Bob Turner, March 8, 2024, Benton	Dr. Lawrence D. Culpepper – Feb. 9, 2024, Baton Rouge
1958 – Elizabeth Walker Johnson, Feb. 2, 2024, Natchitoches	1970 – Gary Elliott, Dec. 27, 2023, Coushatta	Linda J. Finster – March 1, 2024, Flat Rock, North Carolina
1958 – William C. Coney, M.D., Jan. 10, 2024, Jonesville	1974 – John Driscoll, Jan. 26, 2024, Leesville	Ruth Waller – March 12, 2024, Baton Rouge
1958, 1960 – Melva Juanita Martinez Coutee, March 18, 2024, Baton Rouge	1975 – Gary Cloud, Dec. 16, 2023, Shreveport	Dr. Donald Hatley – Dec. 18, 2023, Natchitoches <i>Dr. Hatley was an English professor, founder of the Louisiana Folklife Center, co-founder of the Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival and dean of the College of Liberal Arts.</i>
1959 – Jerry Roy, Feb. 5, 2024, San Antonio, Texas	1976 – Allen F. Carter, Jan. 19, 2024, Natchitoches	Bessie Jones – Dec. 18, 2023, Natchitoches <i>Ms. Jones was an administrative assistant in the Folklife Center.</i>
1960, 1985 – Murray Jean Wannamaker Francis, March 20, 2024, Alexandria	1978 – Judge Lane Pittard, Dec. 12, 2023, Benton	Dr. Robert Newby Glick – Dec. 30, 2023, Fayetteville, Pennsylvania <i>Dr. Glick was a former assistant professor of biology at NSU.</i>
1962 – Clinton Lamon Blue, Dec. 11, 2023, Ruston	1980 – Linda Sue Turner Friday, Jan. 8, 2024, Bossier City	Melvin Moreau – Jan. 11, 2024, Natchitoches <i>Mr. Moreau was employed with NSU for over 40 years.</i>
1962 – Sophie Snell Packard, Feb. 12, 2024, Natchitoches	1983 – Dr. Peyton William Cunningham III, March 6, 2024, Shreveport	Coach Jerry Dyes – Jan. 15, 2024, Fredericksburg, Texas <i>Coach Dyess was a renowned track and field coach at NSU for 23 seasons.</i>
1962 – Ferrell Yarbrough – Jan. 4, 2024, Shreveport	1984 – Gregory Alvin Lloyd, Dec. 15, 2023, Pineville	Dr. Marie Burkhead – Feb. 9, 2024, Abilene, Texas <i>Dr. Burkhead was a professor in the School of Business for 18 years.</i>
1963 – John B. Whitaker, Feb. 13, 2024, Natchitoches	1985 – Mary Winston King, June 1, 2023, Durham, North Carolina	
1962 – LTC James B. “Buck” Trussell, Dec. 20, 2023, Shreveport	1995 – Holly Lane Bishop, Dec. 22, 2023, Keithville	
1964 – Theodore S. “Pete” Cormier, Bernville, Pennsylvania	1996 – Lt. Amanda Fournier, Feb. 7, 2024, Natchitoches	
1964 – Dr. Tommy Doyle Grafton, Dec. 22, 2023, Farmerville	2000 – Christi Ebarb Blankenship – Dec. 24, 2023, Stonewall	
1965 – Joe F. Taylor, Jan. 2, 2024, Coushatta	2011 – Michael E. Rose, March 5, 2024, Bentonville, Arkansas	

# Guess Who

The University Little Theatre presented the Tony Award-winning musical "Cabaret" in March 1974. This photo from The Current Sauce pictured Sally and the Kit Kat Girls. Can you name them? *If you know the names of the actresses, e-mail jacksonl@nsula.edu with your name, city of residence and the year you graduated.*

The Blue Key officers pictured in the Winter edition of Alumni Columns were Greg Comeaux, Liz Hughes and Chris Lyles.

**Those who answered correctly are as follows.**

**Jessica Helmer Brady (2004), West Monroe  
Adam and Sarah Stoll (2004), Gilbert, Arizona**



## Looking Back

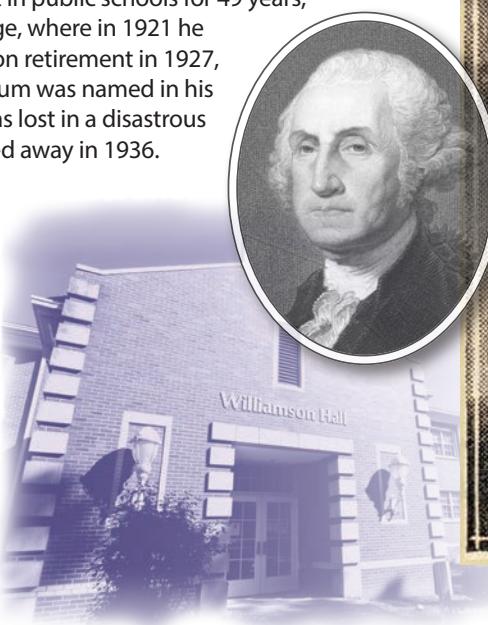
A news clipping dated Feb. 22, 1932, the bicentennial of the birth of George Washington, features a profile of Professor George Williamson, the oldest living relative of the first president of the United States. Williamson served on the faculty of Louisiana State Normal College, as NSU was then known. Williamson Hall, present-day home of the Department of Engineering Technology, and Williamson Museum on the second floor of Kyser Hall bear his name. At the time of the article's printing, Williamson was also one of the oldest teachers in Louisiana.

Williamson was born Feb. 19, 1857. His relationship to George Washington came from his mother's side through a line of descendants. Nellie Custis, granddaughter of Martha Washington and adopted daughter of George and Martha Washington, and Lawrence Lewis, favorite nephew of the nation's first president, were the great-grandmother and great-grandfather of Professor Williamson. Frances Parke Lewis, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Lewis, was the wife of Col. E.G.W. Butler of Duboyne Plantation in Iberville Parish. Their daughter Isabel married George McWillie Williamson of Shreveport in 1854. Prof. Williamson was their second child. Almost as famous is the line of ancestry on the paternal side of Professor Williamson's family. His grandfather was Gen. Thomas Taylor Williamson of Shreveport that formed the Shreveport Trading Company in 1837.

Aside from the distinction of being a descendant of famous families, Prof. Williamson achieved success in the scientific and educational fields. He taught in public schools for 49 years, 14 at Grand Cane and 35 at Louisiana State Normal College, where in 1921 he established a natural history museum for the school. Upon retirement in 1927, he became curator and professor emeritus and the museum was named in his honor. Housed in Guardia Hall, much of the collection was lost in a disastrous fire that destroyed the building in 1965. Williamson passed away in 1936.

Interestingly, Williamson Museum has had only two curators since Prof. Williamson: his successor Dr. George Stokes and Dr. Pete Gregory, who was handed the keys when he joined the faculty in 1961. Gregory remains the longest-serving professor in the NSU's history. He is responsible for the redevelopment and relocation of the natural history collection to Kyser Hall and continues to oversee the museum begun by Prof. Williamson.

Williamson Hall was constructed in 1958 as NSU's biology and geology building. It was renovated in 2008 to provide a state-of-the-art instruction site for industrial and electrical engineering technology students.



Professor George Williamson

**Northwestern State University**

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# **NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY CLASS OF 1974 GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION May 9-10, 2024**

The Golden Jubilee 50+ Luncheon will take place at 11:30 a.m. Friday, May 10 in the Student Union Ballroom.

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